

LINELL C. (NELL) QUINN



BORN: September 1915, Poquoson, VA

DECEASED: January 2011

GRADUATED: Poquoson High School, June 1931

Employed at NASA November 1954 until Retirement, January 1980
(Note: hired when the agency was known as NACA)

Job Title: Computer (and later Mathematics Technician)

1968

When mother went to work, there were no electronic technologies available to calculate values, so her job title was “Computer”. She first went to work in the Pilotless Aircraft Research Division (PARC) as a Computer, and later transferred to the Space Vehicle Group as a Mathematics Technician.

In PARC, several ladies were in one office at individual desks with Friden calculators, manually reading trajectory data from rocket launches and plotting the direction of the missiles. As they read the data, the ladies plotted their readings on graph paper. That information was then given to the draftsmen, in the same office, for finalization. The missiles they were tracking were launched primarily from Wallops Island, VA.

Some of the other ladies in that division were: Mary Alice Woerner, Thelma Bunting, Janie Bunting Copeland, Mary McCloud, Edith Hopkins, and Nadine Kemper, Draftsman/Illustrator.

Mother later transferred to the Space Vehicle Group, where she worked with Charlie Woerner, “Breezy”, Jack Cooper, Jerry Keating, Edward Prior, Jack Mullins, Richard Davis, Tony Fontana, Walter E. Bressette and Dr. W. O’Sullivan.

Mother worked in Buildings 1232 and 1268, and read tapes and plotted flight paths.

Mother loved her work, and most of the young men she worked with were engineers fresh out of college, and away from home for the first time. From the contacts I have made, they tell me that she took them in like a mother hen and loved them as her own. They even nicknamed her “Nellie”. One person even went so far as to say that in the mid-60’s, Langley was very sexist, but that that atmosphere changed slowly and steadily. These smart, hard-working women had a lot to do with that change.

Mother was presented a flag that was carried aboard the fourth flight of Columbia in recognition of her personal contribution towards Making Space Available. Her dedication and team work allowed STS-4 to mark both the successful completion of the Orbital Flight Test program (OFT), and the beginning of another era in space. The award was signed by Donald Heath, Director, April 1984.

Mother was also a long-time member of the Langley Alumni Association.



2009